

# T H E O T H E R D A Y

M y v e r s i o n o f t h e s t e x p e r i e n c e s o n b e i n g

Feeds:  Posts  Comments



## E p i s t e m i c

April 6, 2009 by [2sonrisas](#)

So, I find it quite hilarious that today, I decided to start “reading” the dictionary some and learned that the “word of the day” is:

Epistemic.

Now, probably, many of you are raising eyebrows, scratching heads, and wondering why am I trying to “read” the dictionary. It’s hard to explain, but I have felt quite limited over the last year as I’ve attempted to find my way back to maintaining a daily habit of writing. Aside from the obvious – the babies, introducing Ernesto to Kindergarten, and all the work that comes with being a mom – I have struggled to achieve balance and invest time into my passions. It has been difficult, but I have let go many of my other “responsibilities” and commitments outside of home in order to pave the way back to the garden of dreams I began to sow many years ago.

It is common knowledge that the more one reads, the larger the vocabulary one has. I was one that used to read several books a month. This habit was encouraged by Mom of course. Birthdays and Christmas always arrived with the gifting of new books. Kristi and I would exchange when we completed our own titles. Through my teen years, I had a gal pal who also shared the love of reading and so we would also trade books several times a year.

When I became a mother, finding time to read (for myself) became impossible. I really couldn’t afford to purchase books and I had lost public library privileges – while expecting, home was broken into and amongst the items taken included a box with several borrowed titles. The cost of the “lost” books added up to nearly \$200. I just didn’t have the cash to pay for them.

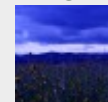
I began to read off and on whenever Mom would visit, which was several times a year. She would always arrive with a new novel she had started on the plane ride. Usually, she would complete her read before returning home and therefore, she would leave me the book. I had so little time to enjoy new books, that just one or two would last me several months until Mom would arrive again. But then, a couple of years back, Mom began to borrow books from her local library

Search

### BLOG STATS

1,199 hits

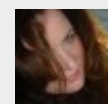
### RECENT COMMENTS



[2sonrisas](#) on [6 + 6](#)  
= 12



[Phil Bassot](#) on [6 + 6](#)  
= 12



[kymberlyfosterseabol](#)  
... on [Daddy's Little Girl](#)

[6 Months Later...](#) on [Daddy's Little Girl](#)

### ARCHIVES

[April 2009](#)  
[March 2009](#)  
[February 2009](#)  
[January 2009](#)  
[June 2008](#)  
[January 2008](#)  
[December 2007](#)

### CATEGORIES

[About Me](#)  
[Celebrity News](#)

instead of purchasing them. Now what?

Well, I usually have the blessing of visiting Mom & Kristi in Indiana several times a year. They just can't get enough of my kids so we have been flown in once every three to six months. This has given me the opportunity to pick a book from one of Mom's ten bookshelves and catch-up while on vacation. I am always allowed to take a book or two with me when flying back home, but I usually don't. I always worry about taking one that Kris may have wanted to get to and hadn't had the chance yet or something to that affect.

My other trump card is bilingualism. These days, I often speak more Spanish than English. Code Switching comes quite naturally; however, because I use both languages so frequently, I sometimes stumble when trying to express myself. This, added to the fact that I am a perfectionist, keeps me from advancing many times. I get frustrated with myself and some of my most anal habits. For instance, I spell pretty well. But if I have one little typo along the way ...I can't ignore that annoying, squiggly line shouting to me "you spelled it wrong, you dork!" I've got to pause and go to it and try to correct it on the spot. I hate relying on spell check, as I want to develop my skills as much as possible. So, usually, I will type (and re-type several times when necessary) until I get it right. Only as a last resort, I will use the spelling and grammar tools if I can't figure it out. As a result...I often lose my train of thought.

This can often put my creativity on hold; don't let me get started on my bouts with the thesaurus. Anyway, I decided I would "exercise" my vocabulary and do some random reading of the dictionary everyday (or maybe every other) in order to awaken those old circuits that haven't been stimulated in so long.

Today's word: epistemic.

epistemic • \ep-uh-STEE-mik\ • adjective: of or relating to knowledge or knowing: cognitive

Check out the Word of the Day at Merriam Webster's online dictionary:

Posted in [Uncategorized](#) | Tagged [blogging](#), [life](#), [writer](#) | [Leave a Comment](#) »

---

I t ' s J u s t a S o c k ... I K n o

March 3, 2009 by [2sonrisas](#)

So really, I almost never, never complain about Esteban outloud. Really. I feel so blessed to have him in my life. But I am a woman and therefore I am allowed to vent just once.

He is so great with the kids and I have always tried to let him parent the way that works best for him. You know, ignoring that nagging feeling to constantly coach him along or rant and rave until he learns to do things my way. This has not been an easy task as I have been known to be a control freak in this lifetime. We very rarely fight and almost never when it comes to kids. I'd say we make a pretty good team. But he is a man and there are just little details that men are not accustomed to polishing.

[culture](#)  
[Dear Daddy](#)  
[family](#)  
[Favorite Reads](#)  
[In The News](#)  
[In The Wierd](#)  
[My Body](#)  
[parenting](#)  
[Society](#)  
[Uncategorized](#)

## PAGES

[6 Months later...](#)  
[Guacamole is a Sin!](#)  
[Two in Diapers](#)

## BOOKMARK ME



October 2010

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

« Apr

## RECENT POSTS

[Epistemic](#)  
[It's Just a Sock...I Know!](#)  
[Trust](#)  
[A House of Dreams, A](#)  
[Foundation of Betrayal](#)  
[You Are Remembered](#)

## TAGS

[Absentee Father](#) [amber](#)  
[blog](#) [blogging](#)  
[body image](#) [burn](#)  
[children](#) [Christmas](#)  
[computer](#) [crafter](#) [culture](#)  
[Daddy](#) [dancer](#) [Death](#)  
[desperate](#) [diet](#) [Drugs](#)  
[exercise](#) [family](#)  
[folklorico](#) [food](#) [friends](#)  
[holiday](#) [Holidays](#)

We all know the economy sucks right now. Esteban works in construction and actually, has made it through most of the winter with pretty steady jobs. The last 3 weeks however, work assignments have been swinging back and forth on a pendulum. I know he worries, but we had prepared for this, so financially we are not feeling the crunch. Though we have plans for the savings, I assure him that there is no need to fret. The bonus – we get to spend lots of time together ...something I never get tired of doing.



Lil Esteban Shows off his socks for the first & last time...

We haven't been out much because of the rain. When I saw the sun start to poke out from behind the clouds, I knew it was time to get out and at the very least, run the errands. The plan, drop Esteban off with Ms. Daisy...I mean, at Ernesto's kindergarten class to help out for an hour or so. I'd use the time to walk the babies until school let out. Then, we'd all head to the grocery store. Last, we'd make a stop for art supplies (cuz I just don't have enough material, even though I have boxes and boxes of stuff) in order to start working on the project Ms. Daisy assigned to the students' fathers. Easy.

Everything went well...even though the kids and I spent more than 10 minutes of potty time in the grocery store restroom (something fathers just can't understand). By the time we made it to the dollar store, little Patricio was sick of being strapped into the stroller. Amazingly, Amber wasn't complaining to get out too. So, Papi (daddy) decided to rescue the little guy and carry him through the store. When I saw him grab the baby, I nearly told him: Don't let those socks fall off and get lost. Instead, I bit my lip and went on my treasure hunt.

As always, Esteban abandoned me in the store. What is it with men that they just can't stick with you? They have to wander off on their own...then they complain that you took too long. They never understand that a lot of the time, you are looking around for them to get an opinion, or yet, you are ready but they got the dough.

holiday holidays  
identity kids life  
mexican mother nicknames  
opportunity parenting  
personal photographer  
post-partum pregnant  
Society sonrisas teen  
pregnancy Teens  
thoughts weight weight  
loss woman writer

## META

[Register](#)  
[Log in](#)  
[Entries RSS](#)  
[Comments RSS](#)  
[WordPress.com](#)



Mommies are always grateful for extra-wide stalls.

Anyways...we checked out, made it to the car and OH NO!!! Papi realizes he lost one of the baby's socks. I wanted to wring his neck. I actually ran back into the store and paced the aisles 3 or 4 times, combing each section, desperate to find that little sock.

Now before you roll your eyes and remind me "it's just a sock"...please allow me to elaborate a bit. This sock was the cutest boy sock ever. A red and white little sock made to look like Converse High-Top sneakers. I had purchased a similar pair weeks earlier

to give away at a baby shower (hi Julie...glad the baby is still snuggly warm in that uterus of yours...3 more weeks?). You see, I am a pack rat. I save everything that has the teeniest bit of sentimental value. I've gotten much better over the years and actually, have done remarkably well when it comes to saving momentos for the kids. Up to now, Ernesto and Amber both have a small treasure bag each with 3 of their newborn outfits, socks & beanies.

I had been feeling guilty as I haven't been able to put together something really special for lil Esteban. We weren't given a baby shower this year while expecting him, so I, forever the practical one, registered for just the basics -bottle supplies, wipes & diapers - my team from PG&E insisted on hooking me up with something (thanks guys!). Mom of course couldn't be talked out of shopping, so I insisted on her only getting some basic onesies and sleepers...we'd worry about cute stuff later, I said.

So a few weeks before Esteban Patricio was born, I did go out to find a special coming home outfit and socks. Those are safely put away now. But I looked at his little treasure bag compared to older brother and sister and thought, "he'll think I didn't love him as much". That day that I went shopping, I came across those adorable little socks and bought him 2 pairs. Brown and Red. Brown, because they'd match with a lot more outfits. Red, because the color really popped and I knew I'd have to snap some cute pictures of him in those socks.

So now, is it "just a sock?"

Well, yes, of course it is...I know. I guess what really bugged me down, is that had I dared told my dearest Esteban, "be careful with those socks"... "don't forget to keep checking for his socks"... "don't let him kick off those socks"...he would have given me "the look" and made me feel like a total nag. But you see, men just don't understand. There are things mothers just know that fathers don't ever stop to anticipate. If fathers had our same fore-thought, they could save themselves a lot of grief. Like, why didn't he just instinctively know that it was a bad idea



to ask me what was wrong when I returned to the car empty-handed and broken-hearted. Didn't he know that while I perused the store, my hopes were brought up, only to be slammed back down?



Daddy intros Baby Girl to Wildlife = Mommy's Heart-Stopping Moment

Just as I made my final round, a voice rang out on the loud speaker: If someone has lost a –at this point my heart literally began to race and I turned to run up to the front of the store –child, please come to the front counter. DOH!

I felt so silly in that moment. I even laughed at myself outloud ...really, would they announce on the loud-speaker: Would the frantic mother of the child who kicked off his beautiful red and white knit sock that she had planned to save for 20 years but now can't since her hubby doesn't pay attention to the little details, please report to the front counter."?

I didn't mean to let him have it, but I did. And now I feel terrible. I'd try to explain, but I know he won't understand. I love him though. And next time, I'm gonna tell him to take care of the socks. That or just snatch them off when he's not looking and stuff them into my pocket. I'm also hoping, that one day, he'll remember not to ask stupid man questions that always get him into trouble because I've gotten really good at not opening the door as long as he forgets to ring the doorbell.

The fear of trust is often the fear of rejection. We all have to deal with this fear. It's something that we learn as children growing up. I wish I could say that I was strong in that sense. I am not. It's probably my biggest weakness. Compounded by scars that mark much of my body, I am still learning to achieve a balance.

I've often swung back and forth between trusting too much and not trusting enough. Both extremities are dangerous. If I build the wall too high, no one gets in. I leave it too low, I am vulnerable. Where do I find the middle?

I spent most of my k-6 years being too trusting. There are many stories that I can tell of my experiences growing up. One in particular still stings as if it just occurred yesterday.

In 5th grade, I was enrolled into a new elementary school. I was scared to death. Not only would I be facing the daunting task of making friends with kids I hadn't grown up with – I'd have to do it wearing a mask. Earlier in the summer I had undergone my 12th surgery. Skin was grafted onto my face from my scalp. I was then required to wear a "pressure garment" for at least 22 hours of the day. The pressure garment is tight and is supposed to help protect the delicate skin from the elements, but also help the new layer stay as smooth as possible.

That first day of school, I was so nervous. By lunchtime, I did work up the courage to ask a group of girls if I could sit with them. They allowed it and just like that...I found my circle of friends.

As in all social circles, there was a "leader of the pack". We all followed her rules of conduct, her rules of appropriate dress attire, and we all nodded our heads yes when she wanted us to. She rarely allowed anyone else to have an opinion which bugged me from time to time. But I was accepted and therefore, I dared not rock the boat. It was already a few months into the school year when I discovered this flaw about the group and I feared it was too late to try to mingle with anyone else.

By the time we moved onto middle school, things had shifted a bit. Somehow, I started to set the tone for the group. I think everyone was just tired of the "same old, same old" from what's her face. I had grown up on the "rough side of town" and therefore I had more interesting tales to tell. I was never obnoxious nor bossy like she was. I think everyone liked this. As she lost more and more control over the clique, she got really angry. Behind my back, she began to tell lies about me to our fellow gal pals. I don't know how long this went on, but one day the beans were spilled. Her accusations were laid out on the table. It took every last bit of me to stand up for myself. In the end I walked away and never returned to that circle again. A week later, she actually asked me if I was going to start eating with them again. I said no & simply walked away for the last time.

What no one knew is that I was hiding on the forbidden side of campus during breaks and lunch hour. I was distraught over the betrayal of my so called friends. I definitely didn't have the courage to try and make new friends. There were only a few weeks of school left and I figured I could just hide out until summer arrived. Many times I found myself crying. I felt so alone.

One day, I managed to sneak into the building through a door that hadn't been secured. I had intended on heading to the restrooms so that I'd at least be in the AC while waiting for the back-to-class bell to ring. I ended up running into "J". I knew her from 5th grade but hadn't seen her much that year. She said hello and stopped to chat with me a bit. She then asked if I wanted to go with her and

her other friends.

There were 5 others in that group. I found myself relieved of the stress of having to fly solo in restricted areas of the school. All seemed to go really well. Two weeks later, it was decided we would develop a friendship club. We spent days talking about the rules and activities we would engage in. We came up with a club name and even a member's only password. It was very exciting.

After a week or so of planning, I found out a devastating secret. School let out for the day and those of us girls who walked home in the same direction made a quick stop at the ice-cream truck. For some reason "J" and "M" were whispering frenitically into a boy's ear and laughing. I knew something was "off" but didn't know what it could be. When our paths seperated, the boy rode over to me on his bike. He advised me that my "friends" were setting me up. The Friendship Club was going to be their way of slapping me in the face with rejection, and to do it very publically. They had no intentions of actually allowing me in the club. They were counting the days until the time would come for them to humiliate me.

I never gave them that chance of course. I never let on that I knew what was going on. I just simply disappeared again. Went back to hiding on the other side of school while everyone ate. I couldn't understand what it was I had done to provoke such cruelty. I learned later that "M's" older brother constantly made fun of me and my scars. He had a series of names he called me and even mimicked the way I sometimes stood with my mouth open, bottom lip jutting down. What he didn't realize is that due to the tight scarring on my neck, the tissue pulled on my chin and in turn my mouth tended to hang open. It wasn't something I could control.

I don't know if the girls had always intended to embarass me or if it was a plan they came up with after being poisoned by the nastiness of one jerk of a guy and his friends. I do know that after that I was never the same. I became much more guarded. To this day, this incident, and others, still affects how I do or don't interact socially

Over the years, I adopted different coping mechanisms. I was everything from sweet to a tough girl. Being tough kept people from messing with me, but it also meant posturing an attitude I wasn't proud of. Yet, that way, I felt in control. If I could control everything, I wasn't as likely to get hurt.

Sometimes, when someone hurts me -even when it's unintentional- I fly back to this moment. I find myself turning events over and over in my head, distrusting everyone and everything. I find myself waiting to be preyed upon and questioning everyone's motives.

Eventually, I move on to hiding and keeping everyone out. It's a vicious cycle. I battle with it and at times I am stronger than others. I've learned that I shouldn't be embarassed by the things I've gone through. I don't have to beat myself up over "what did I do?" This brand of anxiety always leads to guilt. Guilt for crying when there are those who have suffered even more. Guilt over not feeling like a stronger person.

It helps to recognize that bad behaviour is bad behaviour. If it hadn't been done to me, it would have been done to someone else. It's just not personal. I wish I hadn't been so stubborn in hiding things like this when I was younger. I just didn't want anyone, and especially mom, to know how vulnerable I really was. I read somewhere that it does help to let it out. So I am trying. But man, it is hard.

Once upon a time, I joined you in building a dream house. We knew it would be a long-term project, after all, neither of us had any experience. But I really wanted to be a part of that journey. I remember being so shy. However, I loved what we were doing and creating together. We were slow to advance, but that didn't matter to me, I knew it would be worth all the hard work and frustrations once we crossed the finish line.

Much more time went by then we could have ever anticipated - about 9 years - yet I never got bored. The years passed and so many different crew members walked in and walked out of the project. I was faithful. I was there. I knew eventually it would all fall into place. There was no reason to be impatient. Moreover, the most important work was in drawing up the blueprint, laying a strong foundation, and making sure all the supports and walls went into the right places.

And then, we started gaining momentum. At last, it seemed that we gathered all the right hearts and souls to finally surge ahead with our goals. It was fun; there was a lot of laughter. But there were a lot of bumps a long the way. Perhaps not everyone really respected your vision. Perhaps some only enjoyed being part of the crew, going a long for the ride and doing all the fun stuff. Perhaps.

You asked for my help in setting the example and I accepted that position. I tried to encourage a strong work ethic, teamwork and sacrifice. But many times you didn't back me up. Maybe you just didn't see how much they tried to walk all over me -or worse yet, all over YOU. Maybe you didn't notice that they were too immature or selfish to care about the impression we left on those who were just waiting for us to screw up. So they goofed around, abused the tools, and stalled us on occasion after occasion. You apologized from time to time, yet you never enforced a set of rules. You promised that things would get better, and I kept the faith.

The neighbors began to get curious about the work we were doing. They cheered us along and quickly, the word began to spread. Before long, the whole town was overcome with expectation. They just knew that there was no other home like the one we were fabricating. No one had ever tried to showcase such excellence before.

Just as the last few nails got hammered into place, the last touch-ups of paint got brushed onto the walls, my heart was broken. Everyone got ready for the



victory celebration and headed inside to rejoice in the glory of this beautiful new house. People all over the world were going to appreciate what we had done. The anticipation was breathtaking. We all began to head inside, and you stopped me at the door. I was to go no further. You didn't think you could count on me in the future - I had too many other responsibilities. You never thought my commitment was sincere. You figured I was just passing time, I was just engaging in a hobby.

You never considered all the hours and work I put in. Maybe it was my error never to really speak up and let you know how passionate I was about participating. But I am shy. I really am not one to let others know of my needs or desires. I knew my contribution wasn't perfect, but the passion was there. I knew I had a lot of improvements to make, but it couldn't have been that bad. I received compliments and encouragement from many. Only once, did you turn to me and say "good job, I like what you did". So is it just that you hated my work?

You never considered my feelings. You never told me that you had no intention of inviting me inside. Like a giant wrecking ball, you swung at me with full force, completely blind-sighting me. You tore a hole through my foundation, exposing all of my vulnerabilities. I felt all of my hopes and dreams come crashing down around me. And the shame, the shame was immense.

Do you know how ridiculous I felt when the party began and all the crowd was staring at me and wondering why I remained out on the street? Do you know how difficult it was for me not to scream and cry out and ask you *WHY did you do this to me?* You were supposed to be my friend. You will never understand the emotional toll I go through each time everyone asks me why I walked out on the project. Do you know how ridiculous I felt when the party began and all the crowd was staring at me and wondering why I remained out on the street? Do you know how difficult it was for me not to scream and cry out and ask you *WHY did you do this to me?* You were supposed to be my friend. You will never understand the emotional toll I go through each time everyone asks me why I walked out on the project.

And when I had the opportunity to speak to you in private, your response was "this is business". You needed to be able to count on me to be there. Well, hadn't I been...*FOR YEARS?* Hadn't I been the one to never sass you or make your work even harder? Hadn't I been the one to give up doing so many other things while others called in sick or just simply lied about the reason they couldn't show up. I never yelled at you, or disrespected you; I never had a temper-tantrum and made everyone stop what they were doing. If I sound angry....**I AM!!!**

**You discounted me as if I never mattered, as if I never had anything to do with any of the progress you made. Not even a thank you. I am so damn confused and your explanation only confuses me more. We had so many conversations about future plans - you always made me think I was a part of them. That, I DID NOT imagine. And sure, in the end you gave me an invitation to come in...but now I only feel like an outsider. You have hurt me more than you will ever know.**

**But I'll live. I hope your work is appreciated around the world. I hope you achieve your dream. I truly wish you the best. But next time, consult with someone before you allow them to partake in such a great task with you. Be more honest. That way, you won't hurt a friend.**

**So quietly, I retreat. Perhaps I will seek out my own crew and construct the house of *my* dreams. I know that you will do wonderful things. I remain faithful in that. Thank you for allowing me to have tagged along up to now.**

**Good luck and God Bless You on the remainder of your journey. I will continue to admire and support you from a distance, my friend.**

Posted in [Uncategorized](#) | Tagged [blog](#), [blogging](#), [dreams](#), [friends](#), [life](#), [personal](#), [relationships](#), [thoughts](#) | [Leave a Comment](#) »

---

## **Y o u   A r e   R e m e m b e r e d**

January 30, 2009 by [2sonrisas](#)

**Dear Jared,**

**I've been thinking of you a lot lately. I remember the last time I saw you, and I want to cry. In two days, it will have been 4 years. I close my eyes and feel a sharp pain. My breathing becomes shallow and I feel as though my ribcage may collapse.**

**I prefer to linger upon my favorite memory of you. The 8th grade class trip we took to Monterey. I can still hear your hearty laugh - see how every muscle in your face responded. I can hear the subtle lisp in your speech, as you were still wearing a retainer in those days.**

**I didn't snap as many photos as I would have liked to that day. I was feeling a little depressed and lonely. But on the way home - all of us piled up on the bus - you made me laugh. You were just being your usual silly self. I brought my camera out and captured a few of those moments. I haven't held those pictures in my hand for several years - but the image is etched in my memory. I can see you goofing off with Synithia and Joe. I can see your smile and the sparkle in your eyes.**

**Fourteen years later, as you lay there in your casket, I was taken back to that day. I found myself staring at you, studying every square inch of your face. There was no trace of that jolly kid I had attended school**

with so many years ago.

Before I realized what I was doing, I lay my hand upon your chest. My eyes darted towards your lips and it was almost like a wave of expectation crashed over me. Maybe I was expecting to awake from a strange dream, or maybe I was expecting you to take one final breath as all of your family and friends sat there weeping and wondering why.

~@~ **Jared Michael Bruno** ~@~

**At rest in San Jose, California, Sunday, January 23, 2005.**

**Beloved son of Larry & Susan Bruno.**

**Loving brother of Aaron Bruno and David Bruno.**

**Grandson of Ethel Hernandez.**

**Jared's career in the Culinary Industry spanned over 12 years starting at La Foret and ending at Seven Restaurant and Lounge as an accomplished chef.**

**A native of San Jose, California.**

**Age 28 years.**

**We love you Jared. We miss you. We pray that your family has healed from the loss.**

**Thank you for the laughter and the friendship.**

**You are - and always will be - Remembered.**

Posted in [Uncategorized](#) | Tagged [blogging](#), [Death](#), [friendship](#), [life](#) | [Leave a Comment](#) »

---

## A L E T T E R T O F R I E N D S

January 22, 2009 by 2sonrisas

***This is something I wrote just over a week ago. I had so much positive feedback from my friends, I decided to include it here:***

You know...I love my babies so much. I can't imagine ever losing any one of my 3 little angels. I don't know if I would be capable of keeping my sanity in tact. I'd like to share this with you in the hopes that it may move you to help the following cause (or which ever cause motivates you).

21 years ago is a LONG TIME AGO, so my details may be a little rusty (or a lot). I entered the 5th grade at a new school, Allen Elementary. I knew absolutely no one with the exception of my younger sister, Kristi, who was one grade behind me. We had moved to a new house during the summer vacation. For the first time, we would be attending school with children we hadn't grown up with and known most of our lives.

For most children, transitions like this can be daunting. For me, it was a nightmare.

I was only 3 1/2 years old when I nearly lost my life. This is a story I have

attempted to write numerous times over the last decade. It's a story that hardly anyone in my life knows anything about. Truth be told, it scares me to tell it. I am still not ready, but I need you to understand a little more about me before I carry on with my original intention.

Sometime close to midnight, in September of 1980, I woke and wandered into the living room. My mother lay sleeping on the couch, waiting for my father to get home. He was a custodian at a local school. I don't remember taking the cigarette lighter that lay upon the tabletop. I only remember what came next.

Back in my room, I began to flick the lighter – trying to light it. In those times, there were no such things as “child-proof” lighters. On my 3rd or 4th attempt, I not only produced a flame from the device – to my surprise a fireball erupted. That startled me. My natural reaction was to drop it and in doing so, I ignited my pajamas. This was also during an era when laws did not exist to enforce flame retardancy in children's clothing.

I was completely engulfed in flames, yet I never even screamed. Somehow, instinct (an angel) tapped on my mother's shoulder. She woke, heard nothing, saw nothing...but she knew something was wrong. She came to my bedroom to see that I was on fire. I remember how she grabbed the bed sheets and scooped me up into her arms. She didn't let go until she put out the flames. I remember being inside of that sheet and not knowing what was happening to me. I didn't understand.

When Mom was certain that she had extinguished the fire, she put me down and ordered me not to move. I don't know if she then said to me or to herself: “I've got to call the hospital”. It was only then that I began to cry. Amazingly, I was able to move my charred body and follow her to her bedroom. I begged her not to take me to the hospital. I was crying and pleading. By the grace of God, we only lived 2 blocks away from the nearest firehouse. The 911 dispatcher sent the firemen instead of the paramedics. This is the reason I am here today. I would have never made it had we needed to wait for an ambulance to arrive 15 to 20 minutes later.

I remember being in the ambulance. I remember the doctors & nurses rushing me down the hospital hallways poking and prodding me...by this time I was so swollen, it was almost impossible to breath. I cried out for my mother but they had left her behind in the trauma waiting room. I remember being transported to the operating table and at that point, it is mostly a blur.

After many hours of emergency surgery, my mother was told I would not survive the night.

Somehow, I managed to not only make it through that night, but the following 3 months in the hospital. It was a delicate situation and weeks passed before the doctors finally felt I had a real chance at survival. Most people don't realize that surviving the burn is not just about surviving the skin loss and the agonizing pain



that ensues. The true battle is against infection. The common bacteria that one comes into contact with on a daily basis can kill a burn patient within hours. Everything – bedding, silverware, toys and even mom- had to be sanitized before being permitted into my tented room. I underwent many procedures during those months and I hated my doctor for shaving off my hair. Someday, I will talk more of that experience.

Just under a year later when I started school, I was almost walking straight again. I was able to make friends quickly despite the severe scarring that marked 45% of my body. The kids almost never teased me. I suppose because at the tender age of 5 and 6, children are still very innocent and not yet keen to “differences”. I grew up with familiar faces grade to grade. Occasionally there was a student who felt the need to make fun of me. I’ll never forget the time the Principal had to get involved and quiet the rumors that I had HIV (and by the way – this was before the world really knew about AIDS or Ryan White). Many kids stopped playing with me for fear that I was contagious and that as a result, they would end up looking like me and eventually die. Thankfully, most of these kids were quieted by peer pressure. I had my own little club of bodyguards. Children who had grown up with me and would defend me at a moment’s notice.

And then there was Kristi. One time she discovered that an older boy was messing with me. She and her little 6-year-old self chased him all over the playground, threatening to clobber him. He quickly figured out that she wasn’t going to relent. He was nearly out of breath when he finally shouted his apologies for fear of what would happen had she got a hold of him.

This is why attending a new school was the scariest thing for me to do. To complicate the matter, I had just undergone surgery which required me to wear a pressure garment. A mask. There was 0% ...possibility of me blending in with my new schoolmates.

And here is where I transition to Shalon’s story...

Shalon was in my 5th grade class. She was fairly popular and most certainly a pretty young thing. We ended up being schoolmates for the next several years. At the end of my freshman term, I elected to switch high schools and that was when our paths separated.

I don’t remember exactly when I started to notice the protrusion that began to appear on her chin. In fact, it may have always been there. What I do know is that malformation really began to grow.

At this point, Shalon – I apologize if any of my details are incorrect. Again, this is told only from my perspective. Someday we’ll have to sit down together so that you can help me fill in the blanks – though I have been slowly making my way through your website and blog entries – not easy to do as a mother of two in diapers and one surviving kindergarten 😊 ...I never have time for phone conversations, so reading is a luxury often enjoyed at 2am between “feedings”,

LOL.

I noticed that Shalon becoming slightly withdrawn as the mass in her chin began to expand. Always afraid to ask her outright what it was that was deforming her face, I only knew that it must've been difficult for her to adjust. I imagined that it must have been very hard for such a popular girl to have to explain over and over what was occurring to her face. By this point, it was impossible to miss the irregularity of her chin and jaw line.

I remember how Shalon learned to "hide" her deformity in photos. Often posing with her head slightly tilted, her arm bent and her left fist resting upon that spot. I was sometimes envious of her ability to pose like that. I simply had no way to cover the ugly scars that marred nearly my entire face.

After several horrific run-in's with bullies and bad experiences even with those who were within my circle of "friends"...I began to have issues with social anxiety. I put on a strong front and I most certainly relied on a handful of successful coping mechanisms. But I also retreated, turned down invitations to form new friendships; I dared not do the activities I would have loved to participate in for fear of being in a new group situation; fear that I would not be accepted; and fear that I would be ridiculed beyond belief.

I remember that occasionally Shalon was not permitted to participate in certain activities, yet she didn't seem to let that affect her. While it seemed to me that initially it was a real struggle, Shalon seemed to adjust socially and even played some sports and was a cheerleader. From afar, I always admired her ability to stand right in the center of the crowd and not be afraid to draw attention to herself. Shalon also had her crew of warrior soldiers - friends who seemed to have her back at every turn.

It has probably been 13 years or more since I last saw Shalon in person. I had often wondered about her and how she turned out. Recently, our paths have crossed again, and now the mystery is solved.

It has only been a few months since I finally learned what that terrible growth was (is). Shalon has suffered from a facial AVM (Arteriovenous Malformation). Apparently it took most of her childhood for her infirmity to be diagnosed. It is a rare condition and I won't insult Shalon or other AVM survivors with trying too hard to explain it as I am still grasping the terms myself. Simply put, it is a condition one is born with. A developmental error that occurs in the blood vessels that eventually becomes a tangled, swollen web of problems. This condition causes life-threatening bleeds and is often very painful. Little is known about AVM as it is considered to be a "new" medical problem.

Through Shalon's courageous journey, she has endured many of these "bleeds", stares from rude strangers, and a lifetime of self-doubt and moments of insecurity. Shalon...we have so much more in common than you may have ever known. She has begun to share her journey and to reach out not only to those who suffer from AVM's but also to those who have never heard of the illness.

This is how I learned of Baby Nathan. A sweet little boy diagnosed with an AVM of the brain. In early December, his war against the mass within his brain tissue began to look bleak . After several strokes and brain injuries due to clotting of his vessels, the doctors feared that even if he survived, the damage would change him forever. There had been moments of hope over these last few weeks ...however, just yesterday, Baby Nathan, also known as “The Miracle Baby”, succumbed to his AVM. He died in the loving arms of his mother and father. He was just shy of his first birthday

Go forth Baby Nathan and rest. I never knew you in person, and only saw your angelic smile in the pictures your family has shared with the world. May your story help change the lives of others, the lives of us all. Rest in Peace Sweet Heart – know that you will not be Forgotten.

Friends, I invite you to read more about Shalon and others like her through the AVM Survivors website. Most of all, I invite you to read of Dear Little Nathan. If your heart aches as mine did reading his story, I hope that you may feel inspired and find a way to give; to prevent other young families from losing their little soldiers too soon.

We all lead hectic and often times troublesome lives. Thankfully, we don’t all have the daily agony or suffering that the chosen few endure.

I thank you for your time and I beg your forgiveness if I’ve overlooked any grammatical errors. I really did try to write from the heart on this and therefore I ignored Miss Little Perfection within me and chose not to go over it a thousand times...for that reason and because lil Amber just spilled a bowl of soup all over the floor (insert comic relief, yes...it’s ok to giggle).

**Blessings to you all - in memory of**

**Nathan James Avila Andaya**

**January 25, 2008 - January 11, 2009**

See pictures and videos of The Miracle Baby and read his story:

[http://www.avmsurvivors.org/profiles/blog/show?](http://www.avmsurvivors.org/profiles/blog/show?id=1543517%3ABlogPost%3A110403)

[id=1543517%3ABlogPost%3A110403](http://www.avmsurvivors.org/profiles/blog/show?id=1543517%3ABlogPost%3A110403)

<http://www.nathanj125.com/mystory1.html>

Shalon’s Website: <http://shalonavm.blogspot.com/>

AVM Survivors Website: <http://www.avmsurvivors.org>

Posted in [About Me](#) | Tagged [Andaya](#), [AVM](#), [Baby Nathan](#), [blog](#), [body image](#), [burn](#), [children](#), [Christmas](#), [Death](#), [deformity](#), [family](#), [friends](#), [hospital](#), [identity](#), [kids](#), [life](#), [school](#), [Society](#), [survivor](#), [tease](#), [thoughts](#) | [Leave a Comment](#) »

[Continue Reading »](#)

Posted in [Uncategorized](#) | Tagged [blogging](#), [life](#), [mother](#), [parenting](#), [woman](#) | [2 Comments](#)

»

---

## 6 Months Later ...

June 21, 2008 by [Zsonrisas](#)

I am quite emotional having just read the last entry I published, [Daddy's Little Girl](#). Shortly after learning that my father had died, I also learned that I was pregnant. Quite the surprise. I had just given birth to a beautiful baby girl 4 months earlier. Maybe this was life's way of diverting some of that pain. It has been 6 months since I last signed on to this Blog.

There have been many twists and turns in the road I've taken since then. I miss writing. I think I can return to it now. It will be a slow progression I am sure; I am intent on starting from the beginning and working my way forward. Or maybe I'll just cut and paste the story together as I see fit. I have so much to release and I'm not quite sure where to begin.

Time is precious. I have so very little time. But I made a pledge to myself, I would write. So bare with me...if you're still reading along. I don't profess to be the most skilled story weaver, yet I know that the story is worth sharing.

For now, I am checking in, waking from the hibernation I succumbed to many moons ago. I am hopeful that 6 months later, I can pick up where I left off.

I hardly find it coincidental that today, I woke at 4:30 a.m. and was unable to get back to sleep. Today, the day my baby sister Kristi will meet our older sister Velma for the first time. Today is the first time that three of the sisters will be together all at once. Three children of one man who had fathered eight. Three women who never knew that the death of their father would bring them together 30 years later.

I am nervous. I've been to see Velma on three occasions (there's that number again). Kristi, who lives in Indiana, has not had that opportunity until today. It's all so wierd. She and I grew up together. Now we have this older sister who wants so much to be a part of our lives. She is sincere, and I truly like her. But it is still wierd.

Kristi seems guarded - whether she knows it or not. It's never been easy for either of us to let strangers into our intimate circle. I am just hoping that she'll be able to relax and be at ease during our visit. It is a long drive away, 2 1/2 hours. That it is a lot of time to think and feed anxiety. She doesn't know what to expect and I can smell her apprehension.

It is almost time to start getting ready now. The sun is rising and soon, baby-girl will cry out for her milk.

God be with us...

Amber

---

Posted in [About Me](#), [Dear Daddy](#), [family](#) | Tagged [family](#), [life](#), [Daddy](#), [Death](#), [Absentee Father](#), [Sisters](#), [Re-United](#), [Pregnancy](#), [Anxiety](#), [Apprehension](#) | [Leave a Comment »](#)



Just two weeks ago, I learned that my dad had passed away. It wasn't what I expected to hear from Mom when I called her that Friday night.

"Your father has died."

Short, simple and to the point. I don't think I said anything for almost a minute. Her words reverberated over and over in my mind. I held my breath that entire time.

"Oh," I replied. I tried to hide the tremble in my voice, "When did you hear?"

We hadn't seen the man in just over 20 years. It's a long, complicated story that I may go into some other time, but not now. The fact is, he wasn't there. We'd heard that he had looked for us a few times, but the neighbors didn't have our information. We found out by accident when we went back to visit the old neighborhood.

We only learned that he was alive and somewhere when out of the blue, Mom began to receive back child support checks from the State of California. It was quite random. She had long given up trying to collect. Those checks arrived on a monthly basis over the last 8 years. They were only \$92 each – a tale of the times. Child support orders were very different 25 years ago.

This month, in lieu of a check, Mom received a notice that the payer was deceased.

I have bounced back and forth from the moment she told me. I feel so incredibly sad. I mourned the loss of my father years ago. I learned not to ache for him on a regular basis. The only times of weakness were usually while I witnessed a father/daughter dance at a wedding or Quinceañera, or perhaps while observing a moment of bonding between my girl friends and their dads.

I had never really considered tracking down my dad. In part out of a fear of what would lay within Pandora's box, but also out of some quiet allegiance to Mom. She had never discouraged us – Kristi and I – from having a relationship with him, in fact, we rarely spoke about him at all. I learned the most about him when we would have an out-of-state visit from Mom's best friend. She and her husband had been very good friends of my father and played a role in initiating their courtship. Almost forgetting that Kristi and I were around, they would spin tales about the old days. We would usually listen, intent on not interrupting. Sometimes they spoke directly at us, but usually we were quiet, non-participants in the conversations.

But now, learning that he is gone, I am imprisoned by doubts. I have never been able to ignore my wonders: wondering if he thought of us, wondering if he missed us, wondering if he had regretted the pain that he subjected us too – did he even recognize? Now these questions will never be answered. I will try not to obsess, but I know this is going to bug me forever.

I've done some preliminary information research. I believe that he was living in Seaside -hardly more than an hour away. Something about confirming that has driven a stake through my heart. He was so close. What I discovered next only multiplied my grief. He was cremated.

"NOOOOOOO!!!"

Not only was I denied his presence for 2/3's of my life time, now I would be denied the opportunity to sit at his grave-site. The only thing I could think of

when Mom broke the news was, “I will go to his grave, I will place my hand on the stone, and I will talk to my daddy.”

Dealing with death is one of the few things that binds us all as humans. It is different from culture to culture, family to family. Sometimes death is marked in black and other solemn colors. Sometimes it is a time to celebrate – to celebrate the life of he who has died, rather than to mourn the loss of said being.

Death has been something I have quite a hard time accepting. Because of my family background, I really didn’t mourn the loss of a loved one until I was 22 years old. We have a pretty small family. Growing up, it was really just Mom, Kristi and I. All of the other family lived out of state. We talked a handful of times each year and only visited once every 3-6 years. We were not close to my grandparents, so at age 14, when Grandma died, I was sad -but I didn’t mourn. That came much later when I was old enough to really grasp how absent she was in my life, that she chose not to be there, and how sorry she was when she lay on her death bed and did all she could to leave me a final message.

Since that time, I’ve grieved over the passing of one other that I could say I had deep feelings for. I have of course known others who have died: co-workers, parents and relatives of friends, even a school mate I hadn’t seen since the 9th grade. I am always emotional when someone dies; I am very sensitive. But the first time that death really affected me was when a high school friend died of a brain tumor. She had suffered headaches for as long as I had known her. By the time that the tumor was found, it was too late. The cancer took her quickly. From what I understand, she suffered a great deal.

I had moved to Indiana to be with my mom while recovering from a personal crisis. I had only been there for a few weeks when I flew back to California for a two week period to perform “one last time” with the Aztlán Academy. It was then that I heard of Brenda being sick. I called her parents and spoke briefly with her father. She was dying and he nearly cried as I asked for permission to visit her. He told me it was not a good idea, she had had too many visitors over the weeks, it was time for her to rest.

Brenda died several days after I returned to Indiana. She was 23. I didn’t sleep through the night for the next 4 months.

I wasn’t sure how my dad’s death would affect me. I’m still not sure. No matter what, I wish I had given him one last hug. I wish I could have told him that I forgave him. I pray that he passed in peace. I pray that somehow he knew, his daughter loved him.

A part of me will always be Daddy’s little girl.

Posted in [Dear Daddy](#), [family](#) | Tagged [family](#), [life](#), [Death](#), [Absentee Father](#), [single parent](#), [child support](#) | [2 Comments](#) »

---

## T r u n k i n g

January 15, 2008 by [2sonrisas](#)

It was just under a year ago that my team of co-employees and I were gathered for the annual safety awareness meeting. We were all pretty excited because it meant we’d have at least an hour away from our desks.

We filed into the training room, picking up safety packets that sat on a table at the entry before taking our seats. Just as we had all gotten comfortable, the

moderator called us to stand again. She then led us through three stretches. "Safety First" is one of the most important motto's around the entire company. Working in a department where we sit down all day at the computer, ergonomics and stretching is something we hear about everyday, all day long.

After our stretch, we sat through the usual introduction to the meeting – a PowerPoint outline of the meeting's objectives. This alone took nearly ten minutes. I smiled. I knew this was going to be a nice, long gathering. Time away from the phones was exactly what I needed.

The annual safety meetings usually include going through a list of all issues that were of concern in the preceding year. Then we review the new year's goals. Eventually we go over safety procedures like what to do in an earthquake or how to respond to a "suspicious" package or bomb threat. For the most part, it is information that we've heard before.

To end the training, a hand-out went around the room. This was a list of all the newest California laws that had gone into affect – some we may need to know as they might be relevant to our jobs. For example, those who drive for company business or transfer to a department in which they would be driving a company vehicle would need to know that it was now a requirement to have headlights turned on when driving in any kind of precipitation, no matter how light the drizzle.

To keep us alert, our trainer asked us to take turns reading each paragraph. There was nothing too exciting until we arrived at one against "trunking".

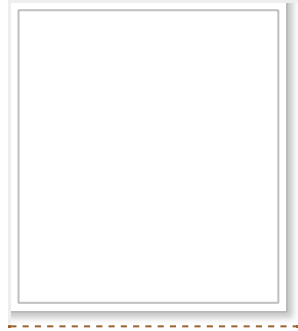
AB 1850 makes it unlawful for a person to knowingly drive a motor vehicle while another person is riding in the trunk; riding in the trunk is also illegal. The driver receives a fine and one point on his or her driving record; the person riding in the trunk receives a fine.

Many of us were surprised to learn that this was an issue of enough concern to grant a law. Many eyebrows were raised, shoulders were shrugged. We all began to chatter about sneaking friends into the drive-ins in order to reduce the cost of entry. Then, Kylie – a mother of two teenagers began to speak. She let us know what the legislation was really about.

The law is a response to some teen drivers' attempts to evade the passenger restriction in California's graduated driver licensing law by hiding teens in the trunk. State law prohibits young drivers from driving with anyone under age 20 unless they are also accompanied by a licensed adult of age 25 or older. Since 2000, there have been 153 collisions involving trunking, resulting in nine deaths and 140 injuries.

This has been such a growing cause of death that fire departments and other emergency response personnel have included a new step in their routines when arriving at a traffic accident. As soon as possible, they check the trunks of cars, particularly those driven by teenagers, for victims who may be injured or deceased.

Just the other day, a young girl in our area died like this. Her name was Jessica Stephens; she was only 16 years old.



I wrote about this with the hopes that my fellow parents would be prompted to talk to their teenagers about how dangerous trunking is. We as parents need to be more involved, and ensure that our children are as safe as possible. Youngsters will always find ways to bend the rules, but maybe with information, we can encourage them to make better choices.

Looking back on that meeting, reading about the new law doesn't seem so silly anymore.

[http://www.mercurynews.com/ci\\_7921329?nclick\\_check=1](http://www.mercurynews.com/ci_7921329?nclick_check=1)

Posted in [In The News](#), [Society](#), [family](#), [parenting](#) | Tagged [AB 1850](#), [California traffic law](#), [children](#), [family](#), [Jessica Stephens](#), [kids](#), [life](#), [parenting](#), [Teen Death](#), [Teen Driver](#), [Teen Safety](#), [Teenager](#), [Teens](#), [Traffic Collision](#), [tragedy](#), [trunking](#) | [Leave a Comment »](#)

---

[Older Posts »](#)